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Contact: Ben Sherman, NOAA Public Affairs
(301) 713-3066 x178

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NOAA RELEASES REPORT ON NATIONAL COORDINATION OF OCEAN AND COASTAL WATER QUALITY MONITORING

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released a new report addressing the need for a national water quality monitoring network. “Linking Elements of the Integrated Ocean Observing System with the Planned National Water Quality Monitoring Network” is a summary of a Rutgers University workshop* that brought together key government agencies, academic institutions, and scientific organizations to discuss the network.

Coordinated water quality monitoring is needed due to the many problems facing coastal water bodies, including nutrient over-enrichment, inputs of toxic contaminants and pathogens, and habitat alteration. A national water quality monitoring network was called for in both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy’s 2004 final report and in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan.

In April 2006, the Advisory Committee on Water Information and the National Water Quality Monitoring Council completed a design for the network that will be part of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, the U.S. system for collecting data and information about the oceans and a part of global observation systems.

Participants of the workshop found that any future management arrangement linking the council to IOOS would require a centralized effort to integrate current monitoring and research programs. Participants identified the Delaware Bay ecosystem as a possible location for a regional pilot project to measure physical, biological and chemical aspects of water quality. The region has a large forested upper watershed, undeveloped estuarine wetlands, and a wide variety of aquatic, marine, and upland species. It also supports many human uses, and there are a number of water quality research and management efforts underway in this area.

"Managing coastal and ocean resources effectively will require accurate information from integrated observing systems that allows for detecting and predicting the causes and consequences of changes in our fragile ocean and coastal resources," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

A national, linked water quality system would facilitate cost effectiveness by integrating monitoring in ocean, coastal and estuarine areas with the upland areas that affect them. Coastal states, territories, tribes and federal agencies would all be involved in administering it. Data and information resulting from linkages between IOOS and the council would be used by multiple organizations to preserve and enhance water quality conditions in U.S. estuaries and coastal waters. The results would also facilitate ecosystem approaches to managing coastal and marine resources.

"IOOS is a critical tool in the coming decade to help generate optimal value to society," said John H. Dunnigan, director of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. "Improving water quality is one critical area in which we can apply an IOOS system to assist coastal managers."

* Editor’s note: This NOAA-supported workshop was held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, in cooperation with the New Jersey Marine Science Consortium. It was co-sponsored by New Jersey Sea Grant, the United States Geological Survey, Rutgers University, and the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association.

Other key workshop results detailed in the report include a description of overarching water quality management issues, an analysis of existing monitoring programs, an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing management of data, and assessments of current regional procedures and technologies for addressing water quality issues.

“Effective water quality monitoring requires routine access to integrated scientific information in formats that are useful to decision-makers,” said Zdenka Willis, director of NOAA’s IOOS program office. “Workshops that bring together multiple stakeholders are critical to helping the U.S. IOOS program understand what information is needed, how this information should be provided, and formulating next-steps for accomplishing this important work."

This NOAA-supported workshop was held September 19-21, 2005 in New Brunswick, N.J., in cooperation with the New Jersey Marine Science Consortium. It was co-sponsored by New Jersey Sea Grant, the United States Geological Survey, Rutgers University, and the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts, and protects.

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Workshop Report : http://www.ccma.nos.noaa.gov/publications/IOOSTechMemo.pdf
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